

and Technical Corrections Act of 2003. My amendment will strengthen our domestic dress shirt manufacturers and the pima cotton growers. My amendment is a technical correction that levels the playing field by correcting an anomaly in our trade laws that has unfairly advantaged foreign producers and sent hundreds of jobs offshore.

The amendment reduces duties levied on cotton shirting fabric, fabric that is not made in the United States. Currently, U.S. law recognized this lack of fabric availability and granted special favorable trade concessions to manufacturers in Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Andean region, and Africa. The U.S. has allowed shirts to enter this country duty-free from so many other countries, while we have failed to reduce tariffs on those manufacturers that stayed in the U.S. and were forced to compete on these uneven terms. My amendment will correct this inequity.

This amendment also recognizes the need to creatively promote the U.S. shirting manufacturing and textiles sectors, and does so through the creation of a Cotton Competitiveness grant program, which is funded through a portion of previously collected duties.

Our country has experienced an enormous loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector. It is critical that our domestic manufactures be able to compete on a level playing field. In the case of the domestic dress shirting industry, the problem is our own government imposing a tariff of up to 11 percent upon the import of fabric made from U.S. pima cotton. My amendment is a concrete step that this Congress can take to reduce the hemorrhage of U.S. manufacturing jobs.

One group of beneficiaries of this amendment is a Gitman Brothers factory in Ashland, PA. The Ashland Shirt and Pajama factory was built in 1948 and employs 265 workers. This factory in the Lehigh Valley turns out world class shirts with such labels as Burberry and Saks Fifth Avenue that are shipped across the U.S. These workers and their families deserve trade laws that do not chase their jobs offshore. This amendment enjoys the support of the domestic shirting industry, UNITE, and the pima cotton associations.

I offer this legislation on behalf of the men and women of the Gitman factory in Ashland, the domestic dress shirting industry, and the pima cotton growers, so that for them free trade will indeed be fair trade as well.

SEPTEMBER 11TH VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND EXTENSION ACT OF 2003

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am saddened that the Senate has been unable to reach agreement to extend the pending deadline of the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund to allow for more time for the many still grieving victims who have been unable to bring themselves to endure the painful process of filing claims.

On September 9, Senators DURBIN, SCHUMER, DODD, LIEBERMAN, CLINTON, CORZINE, and LAUTENBERG joined with me to introduce S. 1602, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Extension Act of 2003. Unfortunately, this bill continues to be bottlenecked in the Judiciary Committee and blocked from Senate passage by anonymous Republican holds on the Senate floor. Every Democratic Senator has agreed to pass our legislation by unanimous consent, but one or more members of the majority are still objecting to its passage in the Senate.

Senator DASCHLE, Senator LAUTENBERG and I have reached out to our Republican colleagues to try to achieve a compromise to extend this arbitrary deadline. We have expressed our willingness to do so for a period of time less than one year, but unfortunately the opponents of this bill have refused to meet us partway. Moreover, they have been unable to explain why it is necessary to force these families to confront this pain during an already stressful time—the holiday season.

Along with Senator DASCHLE, Congressman GEPHARDT and others, I worked hard to create the Victims Fund in the wake of the September 11 attacks. We insisted that it be included in the legislation to bail out the airlines passed in the wake of the most devastating terrorist attacks on American soil. The authorized deadline of December 22, 2003, for applications to the Victims Fund is rapidly approaching, but it has become apparent that many families need more time before they can take that step. Thus, far only a minority of families have applied to the Fund for compensation, according to the Department of Justice.

Ken Feinberg, the Special Master of the Fund, has been doing his best to get victims families to understand their rights and I commend him and others for their efforts to reach out to the victims and their families.

Victims support groups have told me that to this day, they are still receiving calls from individuals who understand that the deadline is approaching but cannot face the emotional pain of preparing a claim. In a survey conducted recently by victims' organizations, 87 percent of the 356 victims who responded expressed support for extending the December 22 deadline by 1 year. Mr. Feinberg has also commented that many victims remain too paralyzed by their grief to confront the logistical burden and emotional pain of filing a death claim.

In light of this painful reality, I believe it would have been appropriate to extend the deadline for filing applications to the Victims Fund. This extension would have given grieving families additional time to mourn those who were lost and to overcome the emotional challenges of filing paperwork with the Victims Fund. Every single September 11 victims support group that I have spoken with agreed that a modest extension would provide some

relief during these dark days for victims' families as they endure the grieving process. There is simply no reason not to grant these families a little bit of relief by extending the deadline. I am disappointed and saddened that anonymous Republican holds will result in unnecessarily closing off the September 11 Victim Fund before each victim had a sufficient chance to consider their options.

With the holiday season upon us, victims did not need this arbitrary deadline confronting them. This was something that the Senate could and should have accomplished for the still grieving victims of September 11. It is an unnecessary shame that we have not done so.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

FREEDOM TO TRAVEL TO CUBA ACT OF 2003

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to express deep frustration with the way congressional leaders have thwarted the will of the majority of Members on Cuba.

Last month, the Senate approved an amendment to the Transportation-Treasury appropriations bill that would suspend enforcement of the Cuba travel restrictions. We passed this amendment 59 to 36—a 23-vote margin. In September, the House approved the same amendment 227 to 188—a 39-vote margin.

So, both Chambers of Congress approved the same amendment to suspend enforcement of the Cuba travel ban and to allow travel by Americans to Cuba. These votes reflected the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of Americans who support ending the utterly ineffectual travel ban.

Opinion leaders, too, in newspapers all across the country, in papers big and small, applauded the Senate and House votes. Orlando, Chicago, New York, Winston-Salem, Tuscaloosa, and San Diego. Papers from every corner of the country commended Congress for its efforts and called for an end to the absurd travel ban.

Then, the Senate Foreign Relations approved by a 13-to-5 margin a bill—S. 950, the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act of 2003—that would permanently repeal the Cuba travel ban. Senator ENZI and I, along with 31 other colleagues—fully one-third of the Senate, from both sides of the aisle and representing every region of this country—introduced this legislation because we felt the time had come to end this pointless ban on American liberty. As its vote demonstrates, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee agrees.

Given these votes, and given the popular support for our efforts to end the travel ban, one would think the conferees of the Transportation-Treasury appropriations bill would not be able to strip out our amendment. When the Senate and House have approved the